

On Determinism and Moral Culpability

Hi! I stumbled upon this reply after checking your profile a bit as the prose demonstrated in some of your posts reminded me of my late mentor's writings.

I found this comment particularly interesting, as Hermeticism actually was the key to solving the problem of evil for me, this is a long, in depth explanation that I think may have many points already gleamingly apparent to you, so don't conflate my tendency to overwrite with assuming any sort of novice on your end, especially since you seem much more experienced and learned in various occult traditions than I. But I found writing it in this way exceptionally useful for setting my own thoughts on the matter straight.

Now it should be noted that Hermeticism is a framework I adopted for its wondrous ability to articulate many concepts made known to me during a transformative period of revelation in my younger years, before discovery I was a Daoist mystic divinating with the 易经 (Classic teenage activities), largely abstaining from associating with theistic traditions as I had built up remarkable angst towards God figures due to difficulties in my upbringing as a Roman Catholic.

I mention all this to be transparent of the bias that my understanding of Hermeticism is inherently linked to its reinforcement of personal propensity towards non-dualist, deterministic, and mystical standpoints. (Mystic in its dictionary definition of the word, not to be confused with the so-called mysticism of taking LSD and absentmindedly reading Carl Jung while droning on incessantly about shadow work)

For my understanding, I typically refer to the G.R.S Mead translation. I personally prefer it, as despite its academic shortcomings, I find its expressiveness and poetic prose more visceral and edifying than the commonplace academic structure.

I am admittedly rather confused by your interpretation of man being the faulty part of nature, as in the text of tract one the Craftsman (Or Enformer in Mead's translation) is the “sibling” to what is named “Man”.

My understanding is that the highest form of God created a raw, primeval, spiritual sort of “Man” after the Craftsman shaped the cosmos along with the Seven Rulers who gave the cosmos, well, rule.

Thus, God, falling in love with man granted him creationary powers, as did the Seven Rulers; After the accrual of which, Man then infamously descended through the harmony of the seven spheres and intertwined with nature; creating a twofold nature of deathless mind and dying body we now call “Human”.

It's stated that nature already had reason-less minds, which God did not extend the reason or Logos to (which I interpret as “rational” human consciousness), therefore I have ascertained that in Hermeticism these things are ruled cosmically by fate, as well as physically the base brain complexes of naturally observable intelligence (nerves, chemicals, etc.)

As such, humanities higher “Mind”, accessible through knowledge of the Self, resting within a “Mindless” form. Creates a dichotomy between a hidden, permanent, stainless Good and the visible, decayable, stainable body, bound and ruled by fate / nerve endings. This of course is mentioned many times in the Hermetica, such as when Hermes infamously tells Tat he ought to hate his body in “The Cup or Monad” and when he repeatedly disdains peoples concern for the bodies complexes in “On Thought and Sense” (But he also expresses that sense and thought are: “at-one and not to differ – in men, In other lives sense is at-oned with Nature, but in men thought”).

Several times throughout the *Hermetica*, Hermes divides a human into three components that make up our collective nature:

- The body, which is made up of the elements of nature (atoms, cells, nerves, etc.), and is subject to fate, base impulses, addictions and the like.
- Our thoughts, which I understand to be the thoughts of the lower mind devoid of reason, are essentially the parts of consciousness we share with other animals. It's similar to the Daoist concept of "Xin", which is the ordinary, conscious, and fragmented intellect which contains opinions, reactions, likes, dislikes, desires. This "Thought" (or Xin) is typically what is attempting to be silenced in nearly every style of mindful meditation.
- Mind, this is our "Higher intellect" and is supposedly the Reason that differentiates us from other animals living in nature. I understand this to be the unconscious part of us that sends thoughts into our conscious minds. Hermes states all thoughts come from Mind, and mind receives these thoughts either from God's supreme good, which brings forth all good acts, or the work of "evil daimons" which causes our evil. (On Thought and Sense)

Now this is where the real meat and potatoes of the problem of evil comes in: If we, as conscious beings, are essentially ruled by determinism, fate, unconscious processes, and metaphorical seeds planted unknowingly in our mind either by God or by disruptive forces, how can we really own our choices? How can we possess moral culpability? And, to return to the point at large, why are we the faulty point in our nature?

This is where receiving Gnosis is typically stressed as an answer in the texts, although I think we can deduce a satisfying explanation: Recall the concept of Xin, the conscious, fragmented intellect that is full of worries and desires, here we must introduce its opposite concept: Dao, this is the self that arises upon the emptying of Xin from the mind; Dao is the awakened, mirror-like

consciousness that is in perfect harmony with the natural flow of the universe, this is not extremely dissimilar from the effects of Gnosis, which are described as perfect harmony with God's will, both understanding and acting accordingly to providence.

To simplify, it is by the middle man of "thought" or Xin that there is an appearance that we are going our own way, an illusory self that is created by the bodies relation to nature to obscure the fact that we are in fact, ruled by the divine forces hidden in the space we fill up with ourselves. But how, thus, are we culpable?

Since we are essentially trapped within this mind of thought, the thoughts we "consciously" create that lead to our predetermined actions are what we are culpable for, but since culpability is a concept derived from human thoughts, our moral culpability is essentially only applicable to other beings ruled by Xin or lower thought.

Otherwise, we would all be enlightened, and no diversity between two human beings would exist, and without this identity created by an individual's lower thoughts and individual understandings, all that would remain would just be the substance of God, which is already aware of Itself.

I personally interpret Gnosis as the process in which an individual would become consciously aware of this, and thus attempt to embody a state of divine action, and try to at-one themselves with the ultimate state of self-awareness by diminishing the sense of individual self. (The dictionary definition mystic seems to be showing)

If you've actually read this, I do thank you very much for giving me a wondrous thought experiment to meditate and write on, and I'm very sorry if I've wasted your time by positing ideas you've already thought about and discarded, or maybe even solved yourself! I wish you well.

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